

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 23 February, 2003

To my Catholic brothers and sisters:

Well, we haven't seen the ground around here since Christmas, really...and the same snow that fell then is still under all the stuff that fell on Monday...it's getting a little much.

We all need Spring Break.

The dullness is starting to predominate...

And it's the dullness that can sometimes undermine everything, even belief.

Sometimes you can feel like the following:

God...are You there?

I've been taught and told I ought to pray,
but the doubt won't go away.
Yet neither will my longing to be heard.
My soul sighs, too deep for words.
Do you hear me?

God, are You there?

Are You where LOVE is?

I don't love well or often..anything or anyone.
But when I do, when I take the risk,
there's a sudden awareness of all I've missed;
and it's good, it's singing good.
For a moment, life seems as it should.
But I forget, so busy soon,
that it was...or what...or whom...

Help me!!

God, are You there?

May God, Who IS there, bless your coming and your going this week.

May you know His Presence.

May you feel His power!!

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

WINTER RETREAT

If you're looking to get some quiet time for yourself, think about making a quiet Retreat. Fr. Jerry and I will be offering a Retreat for Underclasses over 100th Night Weekend (28 Feb to 2 Mar). If you want to be a part of it, please contact us in the Chaplain's Office. I've attached the Weekend Schedule, in case you want to see what we'll be doing.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

The "Couple to Couple League" will be presenting a series of classes on Natural Family Planning. The first class will be held on Sunday, 23 February, at 1300 in Room 308, Thayer Hall. For more information, please contact LTc Tom Strunck (Law) at the following e-mail: struncktf@yahoo.com

DID YOU KNOW?

A DETERMINED LADY:

In the days right before the Civil War...while Catholicism in the USA was young...and priests and bishops ruled their parishes and dioceses with an iron hand...

Imaginative and tough-minded Catholic women were coming to the USA from Europe...and starting congregations of religious women for various apostolic works, often in spite of the opposition of the priests and bishops...

Such is the story of Josephine Moes (afterward known as "Mother Alfred"), who came from Luxembourg in 1851 to get involved in Catholic educational work.

She first lived with the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukee, and in 1856, she entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross at Notre Dame (which was at that point a struggling small school in the wilderness of northern Indiana).

In 1863, along with 3 religious sisters, Mother Alfred took advantage of an opportunity and joined the Franciscan tradition, starting a group which called itself "The Franciscan Sisters of Joliet, IL").

Mother Alfred was in charge of this group from 1865 until 1876, when she responded to an invitation to begin educational work in Minnesota, establishing academies in Owatonna and Rochester, MI.

Then, after a fight with the bishop of Chicago (who didn't want the nuns to work in both Illinois and Minnesota), Mother Alfred left Joliet and founded "The Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes" at Rochester, MI.

24 sisters left Joliet with her to educate the youth of Minnesota.

So Mother Alfred had left two religious orders (one which she had founded) to start her own and fought with at least two bishops before she was done.

But it was a tornado that had the final comment.

In 1887, a tornado devastated Rochester, MI, leveling Mother Alfred's school.

Without missing a beat, she convinced a reluctant country-doctor named WW Mayo and his sons to start a hospital., convincing him that they could establish a world-class medical facility there in Rochester, MI.

And that was the beginning of the famed MAYO CLINIC.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...Michael Kwinn, the son of LTCs Mike and Brigitte Kwinn in Systems Engineering.

Young Michael is fighting cancer.

...All our military brothers and sisters – and their families – throughout the world.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, have all the popes been admirable men? I've recently heard some stories about some earlier popes which make me wonder.

A: No, they haven't always been honorable men.

Over the course of the centuries, there have been several who have been anything but honorable. In some cases, a couple have been completely immoral, at least to all outward appearances.

Probably among the worst was Alexander VI (1492-1503), who was interested in three things: gold, women and advancing the careers of his family (especially his son Cesare Borgia)...and then there was John XII (955-964), the son of the warlord who ruled Rome at the time...he was only 18 years old when elected, and the legends say that he died of a stroke while in bed with a married woman.

My favorite story is about Pope Formosus (891-896). He was a gifted and well-educated man who was elected pope at or around the age of 75. He served for four-and-a-half years and then died.

Nine months later, his successor - Pope Stephen VI, who was bitterly opposed to Formosus – had his decaying corpse dug up, dressed in pontifical vestments and solemnly tried in a mock trial (known in history as “The Cadaver Synod”). A deacon stood next to the body to answer questions.

Poor Formosus was found guilty of “perjury, having coveted the papal throne, and of having violated the canons of the Church”. All of his official acts and ordinations as pope were declared null and void, and as if that weren't enough, the three fingers of his right hand (with which he gave the sign of blessing) were hacked off, and his body was buried in a common grave.

Later on, the body was dug up again and thrown into the Tiber River (a sympathetic hermit found the body and re-buried it).

A later pope – Theodore II – had the body dug up again (third time!) and reburied with full honors in St. Peter's. He decreed that the trial had been bogus.

Still another pope – Sergius III – reversed the process yet again and declared that the trial had been legitimate and that poor Formosus was guilty all along.. This final

indignity aroused such anger among the population that Sergius backed off.

What does all this show?

Some would say that because of people like these, the Catholic Church is wrong to have popes.

I don't agree.

That's like saying that because some Christians are sinners, we ought to "screen" Church members and only keep the "good" ones.

I'm perfectly comfortable with the fact that some popes have not been "good" people. The Church survives such people because the Church exists by God's power and not by human power. So in a kind of odd way, "bad" popes are useful because they demonstrate the abiding presence of God with the Church.

The bottom line is that the teaching of the Catholic Church doesn't depend on the "saintliness" of the popes (or of anyone else). Catholic teaching depends on the presence of God's Holy Spirit with the earthly Church.

After all, didn't the first pope (Peter) deny Christ three times?

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

THE CHURCH OF SATAN:

OK, OK, so it's not formal "theology" in the classical sense...but it certainly involves theological thinking...so here it is:

First of all, it's important for accuracy's sake to distinguish between members of THE CHURCH OF SATAN and your ordinary "satanist". The CHURCH OF SATAN is organized into a "church" and has a definite structure and a definite set of beliefs...as opposed to the "satanists" you see in movies.

THE CHURCH OF SATAN was founded in 1966 in San Francisco by Anton S. LaVey, who was its high priest. It had its origins in classical voodoo and ritual magic, and its initial growth came from the mass media, which covered LaVey conducting a funeral in San Francisco for a member of the US Navy.

THE CHURCH OF SATAN worships Satan...but in their eyes, Satan is not a being; instead, Satan is a representation of the "forces of nature".

To this type of Satanist, the "self" is the highest embodiment of human life and is sacred. Members are encouraged to develop their talents and human potentials to the highest degree. To this end, they practice "magick", which is defined as "the art of changing situations and events by means of one's own will" when, under normal circumstances, such a change would be impossible.

Their ethical practices and behavioral principles include these "Nine Satanic Standards" from "The Satanic Bible":

- 1) Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence.
- 2) Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual illusions.
- 3) Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit.
- 4) Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates.

- 5) Satan represents vengeance instead of “turning the other cheek”.
- 6) Satan represents responsibility for the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires.
- 7) Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better but sometimes worse than four-legged animals.
- 8) Satan represents all of the so-called “sins” as they lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification.
- 9) Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, since he has kept it in business all these years.

Also, these Satanists are opposed to the use of narcotics (which dull the senses) and suicide (which cuts off the great gift of life). They are also firmly in favor of “law and order” and should not be confused with “satanist” groups which engage in illegal activities.

Their worship is based on the belief that human beings needs ritual, dogma, fantasy and enchantment. The actual rituals are based on magic, and there are three types: sexual rituals (to fulfill desires), compassionate rituals (to help one another), and destructive rituals (to express anger, annoyance or hate).

The rituals generally include a black robe, an altar, a symbol of satan, candles, bells, a chalice, elixir (wine or some pleasant drink), a sword, a model of a phallus, a gong and parchment.

And that’s what these people believe.

It doesn’t take long to understand the difference between this outlook on life and that of Jesus: Jesus’ “philosophy of life” emphasized the “outpouring of self” as the highest ethical principle; “self” becomes secondary; and ultimately, as in the case of Jesus, it is only with the “sacrifice of self” that one is most truly lifted up into transcendence and to God, the ultimate fulfillment.

With the Satanist, the “self” is the center, and there is no transcendence (in the Christian understanding of the term). A person exists only for “self”, and fulfillment is defined as simply the “triumph of the ‘self’”...often in deliberate spite of others. The “self” is the ultimate source of one’s strength and the center of one’s attention.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“PRAYER

gives us the opportunity
of getting to know someone we hardly ever meet.
I do not mean just our Maker,
but OURSELVES.”

Dean Inge

And that’s the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

Hope you haven't allowed the weather
to get under your skin.

Spring Break isn't too far away.

May God increase your trust and confidence.

Woodie